

Better Homes and Centers



Michigan Department of
Social Services

School-Age Child Care

Issue 23 Winter 1990

DEVELOPING THE OTHER THREE R's

Connie Macek

*Director, Early Childhood Programs
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A good school-age child care program is a home away from home where children can learn and play. It is a safe place, whether in a home, a school, or a child care center, where parents can leave their children, knowing they will be happy and well cared for.

Children in before/after school programs need a home-like setting with the flavor of a neighborhood, where they can experience physical activities, self-expression through arts and crafts, and socialization with their peers.

Many children, after an intense day at school, want to be alone or with a few close friends. Children in an after school program have been in a group situation for most of the day. The constant demand of interacting with others can be stressful if there is no relief available. Caregivers can recognize this need among children by purposefully making solitude an option. A quiet corner with pillows, books, and perhaps even soft music creates a refreshing haven.

Children need out-of-school time to develop the other 3 R's: resourcefulness, responsibility, and reliability. Child-initiated activities in an open-ended setting allow the children to master their own interests and to use their free time constructively. Real tasks appeal to school-age children who desire independence. They enjoy opportunities to sew a button, make a snack, repair a toy, or even to help create an activity for the younger children. These are experiences that they may have encountered at home with a parent.

Physical play involving all the large muscles, requires room to run, jump and climb. Although games are enjoyed by school-age children, they can lead to feelings of rejection by the child who does not "measure up" to his own or to others' expectations. Competitive feelings are strong at this age. Children need to be encouraged to play for fun, and helped to realize that competition must be fair. Caregivers can guide children to respect others' rights and feelings while playing games. Cooperative games offer all the advantages of competitive games without the damage to the children's self-esteem.

(Continued on page 2)

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The Division of Child Day Care Licensing is facing a serious dilemma. Child care is a major social and political issue and will continue to be during the 1990's. Major state and national initiatives exist to stimulate and expand the market of available child care resources. The number of licensed child care centers in Michigan has increased by 1092 since 1981. The number of licensed group homes has increased by 1056 during the same time period. This represents approximately 84,000 additional licensed spaces during the last 8 years. During this period of time, Division staff resources have diminished because of a reduction of state and federal resources.

Meeting this exploding demand for child care is the rapidly growing number of programs for school-age children. School districts in particular are expanding before and after school programs at an ever increasing rate. The demand for before and after school care in our neighborhoods is also increasing. Family and group homes are receiving more and more requests from parents for this type of care. Everything on the horizon suggests that the demand for this type of care will continue.

These ever increasing programs have put a serious strain on the Division's capacity to adequately regulate and monitor as needed.

Right or wrong, staffing issues impact on Department services. Licensing programs are no different. The degree to which Licensing Division staff are able to carry out statutory mandates and Department policy relates directly to sufficient number of staff.

The reality is that we have a continued increase of work demands occurring simultaneously with the reduction of staff resources which creates a serious dilemma for the Division. While the outcome of this dilemma is uncertain, school-age programs may be affected as well as other licensing activities.

Many existing programs for school-age children have welcomed the existence of licensing regulations to establish a base line for children's safety and welfare. This issue of Better Homes and Centers is intended to offer providers additional resources for improving the quality of their services.

Ted deWolf, Director
Division of Child Day Care Licensing

DEVELOPING THE OTHER . . .

(Continued from page 1)

School-age children also benefit from the emotional release that sand, water, and dramatic play provide. All of these creative media are just as appropriate for the school-age child as they are for the preschool child. An age range of 3-4 years is similar to that in a family or neighborhood. By making all activities available to all children, providers encourage each to participate at his own level. An out-of-school program opens new doors to children and allows them to experience many activities.

Children also need time to pursue their own interests and talents and they appreciate a place to keep their belongings or an incomplete project where it won't be disturbed.

School-age children like to try everything — a new art activity, climbing to the top of a rope, trying to race around a building, or helping to prepare a new snack. They need a program which offers warmth and security; a program which will nurture and respond to them; a program which will accept them as they are and see each child as unique.



GETTING STARTED: SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The following guidelines were developed by the Wayne County Intermediate School District.

- **Need a sponsor.** An administrator, a principal or a central office staff person, who is enthusiastic about school-age child care is crucial to the success of the starting process. Her leadership and expertise is needed in setting up the administration of the program and in gaining parent interest in the program.
- **Call Michigan Department of Social Services, Child Day Care Licensing early.** SACC programs must be approved by this department. Your licensing consultant can be extremely helpful in letting you know **WHAT** you must consider in selecting a site, **HOW** you can get the most usable equipment, and **WHERE** you can apply for a waiver if applicable.
- **Visit other programs.** Call your local Intermediate School District or your regional 4-C's to find out about other school districts that have school-age child care programs. Visit more than one program.
- **Need Assessments are only a guess.** In starting a program, it is important to survey the geographic community to find out if there will be enough children to pay for a program. This is only a guess. Even preregistration does not guarantee those children will attend. Allow at least one year of operating at a loss until the community knows they can trust the program will continue and that it is a quality program.
- **A telephone is a must.** Once you start advertising the program, you need a telephone line (with an answering machine) so parents have one place to call if they have questions.
- **Plan a realistic start up budget.** Start up costs may entail physical site renovation, toys, games, supplies, telephone, advertising, staff preservice training, storage containers, and furniture.
- **Thoroughly plan fees and billing procedures.** There are many ways to set fees and bill consumers. They range from setting hourly fees to setting yearly fees. Smaller programs tend to charge by the hour. Larger programs tend to set fees by larger blocks of time (i.e. weekly, monthly, yearly).

For a copy of the Wayne County School-Age Child Care Resource Manual send a check for \$10.00 payable to WCISD to: Dr. Barbara Papania, 33500 Van Born Rd., Wayne, Michigan 48184.

DO WE HAVE TO LEAVE?

Georgette Gallick
Site Director/Teacher
Camp Fire Kids Club
MiSaBa Council of Camp Fire, Inc.

"Do we have to leave?" These are the words of a happy child in a quality latchkey program. Creating a latchkey environment that is educational, safe, and at the same time entertaining was very challenging. However, armed with a few inexpensive items, patience, and the right attitudes, we think we have produced a latchkey program that children look forward to attending week after week.

Safety is always the primary concern at our program. Children who come to our program have the opportunity to interact with conscientious adults who care about their safety. We've found that children tend to be more respectful to rules they have helped make. As a result, our staff—one head teacher, one caregiver, and one teen helper—helps the twenty-five children in establishing rules and regulations, always ensuring that the choices the children make respect the rights and safety of their playmates.

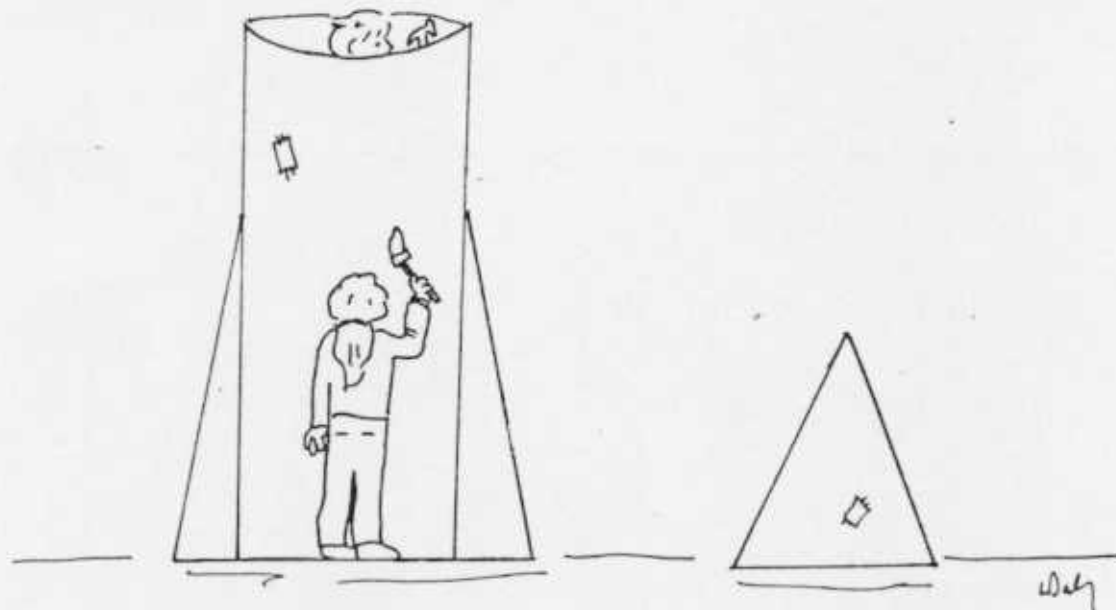
The children not only participate in setting the rules but also have a hand in creating the activities. We try to keep the activities flexible and free-flowing. We organize the activities yet refrain from controlling them by encouraging the children to expand the activities through their own creativity and improvisation. It is not unusual to walk into our site and find spaceships under construction, puppet shows in action, and beautiful artwork being created. Inexpensive items such as play telephones, old jewelry, hats, purses, and play money make the activities more realistic. The staff stirs

creativity and imagination by asking questions like "Where will the spaceship go?" or, "What town is the puppet hero from?". Extending the activities this way makes them more entertaining and satisfying.

We try to make the physical and social environment as pleasant as possible by modeling the site after the children's homes and neighborhoods. It is a place where the children can interact with their peers and with adults. Each child has a place for personal belongings and a place to hang artwork or other things they would like to share with the group. There are blankets, rugs, and pillows for relaxing. Most importantly though, there are places where a child can enjoy some quiet time alone, read books, or finish homework. Our program is designed to be a nice change from school. The children have many opportunities and freedom not present at school. This freedom is available to the children as long as it does not threaten the safety or rights of their playmates.

One of the most important opportunities our program presents is the opportunity for the children to develop a close one-to-one relationship with any member of our staff. We try to get to really know each child and listen to what he has to say and ask questions about his day. A child feels good when a member of our staff asks her how the big test at school went today or whether or not she won her soccer game last night. Most importantly though, our staff respects each child's privacy.

The success or failure of a latchkey program relies not so much on the activities and resources available but on how those activities and resources are presented and directed. Safety should always be the foundation of any latchkey operation. The children's involvement from setting rules to creating activities has made our latchkey program one that parents trust and children enjoy.



LIFE AFTER BOTTLES, DIAPERS & STROLLERS

*Christine Meyer
Group Day Care Home Provider
Washtenaw County*

I have been involved in licensed day care for four years. I am married, with two boys, aged 10 and 13. We have lizards, a rabbit, two cats, a poodle, a gerbil, and one gold fish. I enjoy children of any age, and really like being involved in their lives.

Over the summer I had the opportunity to care for a group of school-age girls ranging in age from five to eleven years. There are a number of advantages to having older children. The possibilities are endless as far as activities. For example, when planning a field trip, I didn't have to worry about keeping bottles cold, changing diapers, or pushing more than one stroller! Without these added concerns, the boundaries were limitless.



School-age children are a joy to do crafts with because of the number and variety of things they can do. The children in my care made windsocks, friendship bracelets, paintings, headbands, pot holders and more. Lunch, which can be hectic with small children is a fun time with school-age children because they can participate more actively in the preparation. For instance, pizza is a favorite item, giving each child the opportunity to develop kitchen skills, as well as guaranteeing that the entire lunch will be eaten! School-age children also enjoy planning and preparing sack lunches for field trips.

Speaking from my own experience, parents of school-age children seem to be more supportive and less worried about the nature of activities planned by a

caregiver. They tend to volunteer more readily when something a little extra is needed in the way of time or materials for a planned activity.

Discipline, always a factor in a day care setting, seems easier when dealing with school-age children. They understand the limits and tend to observe the rules more readily, therefore behaving in a more appropriate manner. One method I found effective was to give extra privileges or extra activities for good behavior.

There are disadvantages to caring for school-age children, however, they tend to be offset by the advantages. First, the payment rates for older children is about 30% less than that for an infant. Second, when the summer is over, the older children will be returning to school, leaving openings for the younger children. The openings are sometimes more difficult to fill, which results in the loss of wages for the caregiver. Finally, the caregiver must learn to deal with peer group influences sometimes a problem with school-age children. Often this can be dealt with by taking the opportunity to highlight a learning experience, by talking with the children about their feelings and those of others. Is this a disadvantage? I'm not sure. I suppose it depends most on the caregiver's comfort level in dealing with the children entrusted to her care. Each caregiver must determine for herself how to handle the possible disadvantages.

It has been my experience that each child brings with her a sense of joy and wonder; however, the school-age child brings the added fun of full communication, understanding, and a never ending learning experience, for both child and adult. I have always come away with a sense I have gained as much, if not more, than I've given. Day care is often a difficult but necessary choice for parents. I hope to make that decision a little easier and less painful.



SPECIAL CARE FOR SPECIAL KIDS ONE COMMUNITY APPROACH

Kathy Scott

*Group Day Care Home Provider
Washtenaw County*

In my group day care home for the last six years we had served children with special needs. Our interest in this began with my special education background. It continued when we became part of a federal demonstration grant designed to provide training and support to home child care providers interested in mainstreaming special needs children with their non-disabled peers. However, one problem we never thought about all those years ago was what will happen to these children as they age but continue to need child care?

Faced with a diverse group of clients ranging from a six-week-old infant to an 18-year-old severely retarded adult, we found it nearly impossible to coordinate a service that was appropriate for all involved. But by this point we had served these families for up to five years and knew that if they left there would be no way for them to get child care in an affordable price range. This was the beginning of the **Just Us Club**.

The problems involved in setting up a situation that would be appropriate for our young people seemed insurmountable. We needed to find a space and get our license like any other center. Parents in our child care program banded together to form a nonprofit corporation along with my partner and myself. This became the board of directors of our new nonprofit corporation. They decided to approach the school about a latchkey program based in the school building that was already designed for the students and their physical needs. The parents' pressure and the school principal's interest in the project eventually won approval from the local board of education and the district-level administration.

Surprisingly, the Department of Social Services licensing regulations were not stringent enough to protect the youth we were aiming to serve. Instead of asking for exemptions to loosen the regulations, we had to establish our own standards that exceeded the rules. A licensing meeting was set up to include myself, a parent, several representatives of the Department of Social Services, a consultant from the intermediate school district and the school principal.

The group's primary concern was that the adult-child ratio was adequate to provide for the extra discipline, physical demands and varying abilities and disabilities of the children. For this, the special education guidelines and the joint experience of the group provided a consensus for agreement. The disability labels served as



a method of separating the students into groups with similar needs and then assigning ratios. For example, we felt that the severely mentally impaired, the severely multiply impaired, and the autistically impaired need an adult-child ratio of 1-3. Yet the educable mentally impaired require a different degree of supervision, so we suggested a 1-6 ratio.

Another area of concern was the floor space allotted to each child. Again the group chose to use special education guidelines. The DSS regulations and the special education rules are similar for walking children but DSS had no rule for children using wheel chairs. There was agreement on the use of the educational rule of 60 square feet per child.

In the area of programming for the disabled, the choices are somewhat different from the choices for the non-disabled. The staff must have more specialized skills than a staff for young children with no serious developmental delays. One way we found to get staff with special skills was to hire persons with music, recreation or art therapy training. These persons often have the people skills and activity skills in one person. 4-H and scouting have been great ways for students to do modified age-appropriate activities with staffs that are interested in supporting our program. It has also provided them with peers. Our kids have sold cookies, earned badges and exhibited in the county youth show with 4-H.

Many other less costly guidelines have been developed for this project. The phone must be in the room or within view of the room. We do not recommend field trips because providing transportation is not possible. Developing these guidelines has forced us all to think about each phase of the program and how we would handle it in this very special group.

Our center has been an avenue for parents, school, community agencies and local professionals to come together and develop a service that is minimally intrusive on budgets and time, controlled by the families, and enjoyed by the kids.

WHOSE IDEA WAS THIS ANYWAY?

Jill Edwards
Child and Family Services Director
Mid-Michigan Alliance for
Community Development

Guiding school-age children is as simple as treating them as respected individuals. They are wonderful sources for ideas and have a great deal of experience in knowing what they enjoy. Children who are active in planning the program and busy with enjoyable things to do are proud of what they can achieve.

School-age children are individuals with different needs, desires and, especially, minds of their own. Providers can use this to their advantage by involving the children in daily planning of activities and basic policy-making. The children in our center found it exciting to plan activities and liked knowing what to expect. Park day, video day, library day and, in the winter, ice skating day were among the favored activities, as well as recreational games, art contests, puppet shows, and field trips.

The children can also be active participants in setting up the program rules. You will find that they are often more strict on themselves than adults. Developing the rules allows the children to be responsible for their own actions since they know what the consequences may be if a problem occurs. Posting the rules helps to remind the children as well as keep the parents informed.

It is also important to encourage responsibility through daily activities. For example, a task jar can be designed in which the children select a task to be performed each day (e.g. preparing snacks, sweeping the floor, garbage duties). This can lead to the children gaining self-help skills.

Providing child care for school-age children is not always a simple task. The children often arrive fatigued from a lengthy day at school. It takes a great deal of time, trial and error, and very special planning to create a positive learning experience. This includes behavioral limits and guidelines to lead children to and through adulthood. Child care providers, parents, and the children themselves, working cooperatively, can create this environment. It takes creative and stimulating activities along with discipline and guidance policies that encourage a positive and enjoyable environment.

SETTING THE RECORDS STRAIGHT

Katie Valentine-Ammann
Center Licensing Consultant
Ingham County

Accurate records are an important part of your business. Attendance records are critical for billings; children's health records and parent information help you know your clients so you can deliver the best service; and organized business records make meeting the IRS less threatening.

Purchasing a portable file box is a good way to start your organizing. Some helpful hints to keep the records straight are:

- Organize into categories that you will use, such as *children's records, staff records, parent information, business information and miscellaneous.*
- The miscellaneous category is where you file things that don't fit into an established category. Review this file often and when you find more than two pieces of information on the same subject, you have started another category!
- Label the file folders clearly. Block printing is quicker and easier to read than cursive writing.
- Color code with stickers, labels or highlighter if that will make it easier for you or someone else to find information.
- File the information as soon as you receive it.

Try some of these little tricks to make attendance record-keeping less of a chore:

- A sign in/out sheet on which parents indicate time of arrival and departure is a good way to know the exact times children have been in care.
- In programs where children arrive or leave without parents (such as before or after school) older children can sign in/out themselves. A clipboard with a small stick-on clock and pen attached simplifies this procedure. Children's names can be listed alphabetically on sheets with space for signature and time.

A calendar can do more than tell you the date. Use it to record due dates, planned activities, fire drills, birthdays, special occasions and other events. Color-code items for easier reference.

Finally, it is recommended that records be kept for three years. Label storage boxes or files so that information can be found quickly.

While it may never be a favorite part of your job, accurate record-keeping can free you to focus on your most important function - **caring for children.**

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

Activities for School-age Child Care, 1977 R. Blau, E.H. Brady, I. Beecher, B. Hiteshew, A. Zavitkovsky & D. Zavitkovsky, NAEYC

Half a Childhood: Time for School-Age Child Care, 1984, J. Bender, B.S. Elder & C.H. Flatter, School-Age NOTES, P.O. Box 120674, Nashville, Tn 47212

School-Age Children and Boxes, "Texas Child Care Quarterly, Summer, 1988

Cub Scout Fun Book, 1986 Boy Scouts of America, Irving, Texas

Cub Scout Leader How-to Books, Boy Scouts of America, Irving, Texas

School is Out? D.B. Fink, 1988 Boston: Exceptional Parent Press (149 pages \$12.95)

School-Age Notes, P.O. Box 121036, Nashville, Tenn. 37212, (615) 292-4957, \$14.95 for 1 yr. subscription. Also request a catalogue of dozens of resources for school-age children.

School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual 1982. R. Baden, A. Genser, J. Levine, M. Seligson, Auburn House Publishing Co.

From the *Texas Child Care Quarterly*

"A Learning Environment for School-Age," Linda Gifford. Summer 1983

"Making an Energy Center for School-Agers," Barbara Langham, Part 1 — Winter 1982, Part 2 — Spring 1983.

"School-Age Gift Ideas," Summer 1982.

"Social Skills for School-Age Children," Steven Asher. Spring 1987.

Easy-To-Do After School Activity Series.

Set A — Arts and Crafts, Cookbook, Holidays.

Set B — Paper Capers, Science Fun, Puppets.

Imogene Foote. Order from School-Age Notes. \$12.95 per set.

UPCOMING CONFERENCE

Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, February 1-3, 1990. Contact Dan Hodgins (313) 762-0489 or (313) 694-2416.



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PROVIDER'S CORNER



One goal of early childhood education is to help children look beyond the stereotypes they see on T.V., Alice Ormsbee, family day care provider, Eaton County, spent some time this summer with her day care children studying American Indian life. This is what she wrote to us.

"This summer, I had my day care kids do an

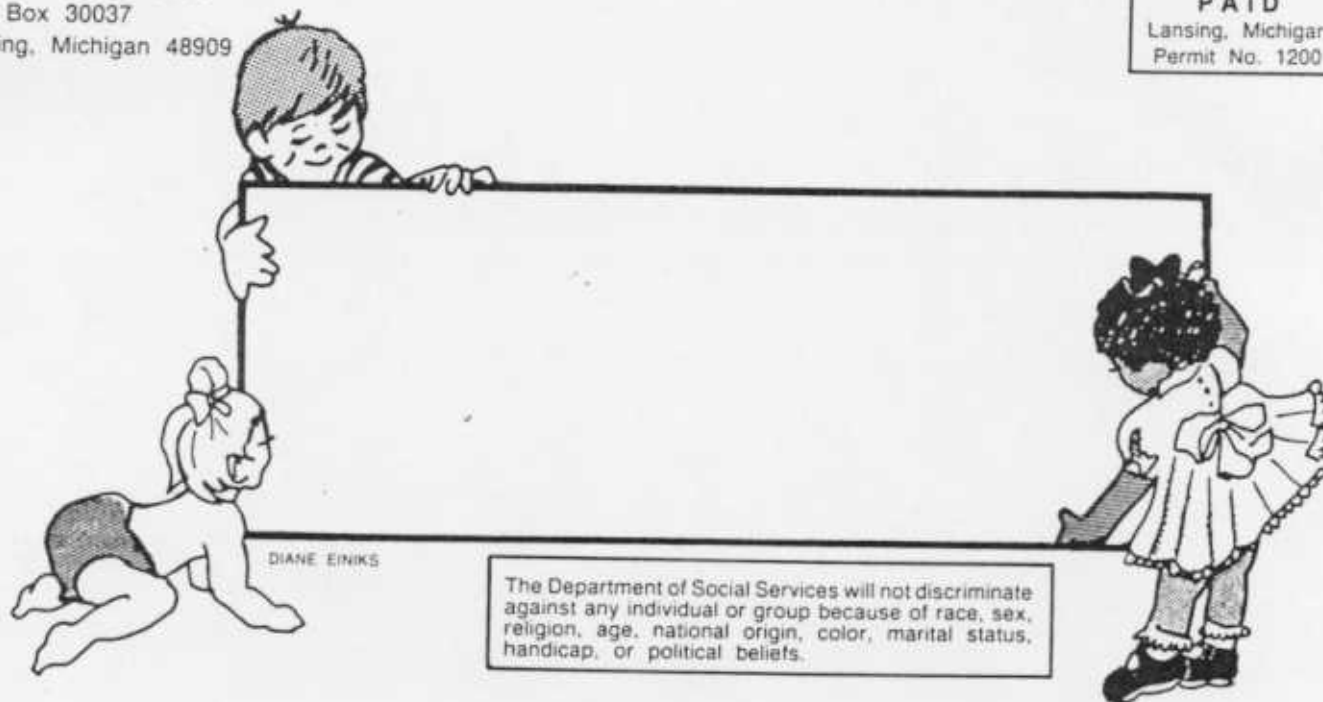
Indian project. They planted corn and pumpkins. They made a book about Indians and drew everything - a teepee, peace pipe, and dolls. They made Indian headbands and a big teepee out in the backyard. They talked about what they thought the Indians ate, how they dressed, and how they got their food. We got books about the Indians and the older children read to the little ones."

The hands-on activities and the older children assisting younger ones made these very appropriate activities.

It is also very important to be sure that the children understand that this is the way Indians used to live and that their life today is somewhat different - just as the children's life is different from their grandparents.

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